

[TS-HAK-AB911]

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
26 October 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

MORI/CDF C03223207

MIDDLE EAST

Situation Report Number 82
(As of 0630 EDT)

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS
APPLY

THE MILITARY SITUATIONGENERAL

(All times cited in military paragraphs are
Cairo/Tel Aviv time, unless otherwise specified.)

1. Fighting began before dawn near Suez City at the southern end of the canal. The Israelis claimed that the Egyptian forces on the east bank began the firing; subsequently air attacks [redacted] on the Egyptian positions. A UN observer in the area reported heavy explosions.

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3. Except for one Israeli helicopter reported to have been destroyed by fedayeen forces in Lebanon, no activity was reported along the Syrian front over the night.

OSD review completed

NAVY review(s)
completed.

State Department review(s) completed.

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STATUS OF SOVIET FORCES

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6. Surveillance of US aircraft carriers under way in the Mediterranean continues. As many as six Soviet naval combatants and two amphibious landing ships are now within 100 nautical miles of Alexandria. These units include a Sverdlov class cruiser, and five destroyers. This deployment to the neighborhood of the Egyptian coast may represent an attempt to allay Egyptian fears of Israeli seaborne operations.

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SOVIET AIRLIFT

SOVIET SEALIFT

8. No additional suspect Soviet arms carriers have entered the sealift to the Middle East since the Fizik Kurchatov departed the Black Sea on 23 October.

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EGYPTIAN FRONT

9. Fighting began before dawn near Suez City at the southern end of the canal. A UN observer southwest of the city reported explosions northeast of his position at 0608. The observer subsequently said that he was evacuating his position. Israeli spokesmen claimed later that the Egyptian forces from the 3rd Army now besieged on the east bank of the canal began the firing and were attacking Israeli positions on the west bank. Israeli air force fighter-bombers began attacking Egyptian positions heavily on the east bank later in the morning. Casualties have been taken by the Israeli forces and at least one medical evacuation helicopter [redacted] returning to the Sinai with wounded on board. Prior to the onset of the firing, no fighting [redacted] on the ground over the night and the air forces of both sides had been engaged in local defensive patrols. Israeli aircraft also flew reconnaissance missions over the canal area at dawn.

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11. The Egyptians also have small patrol, torpedo, or guided missile boats in the Red Sea. The nearest Egyptian naval base at Al Ghurdagah (Hurghada) is only some 35 miles away. Starting at 0722--22 minutes after the tanker was reported struck--Israeli aircraft began

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[REDACTED]

25X1 flying over the area of the reported attack, joined some 20 minutes later by one helicopter. Israeli aircraft were [REDACTED] subsequently in the vicinity of Al Ghurdagah and an air strike could be under way or impending.

12. The Egyptians had claimed that the Israelis sunk a Greek oil tanker off Suez yesterday. The tanker had been supplying Egyptian positions along the Gulf of Suez. 25X1

[REDACTED]

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SYRIAN FRONTUNITED NATIONS

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19. According to the Consul, the UNTSO sources report four more units are on their way to man the six observation posts on the Israeli side of the cease-fire line.

AUSTRALIA CONSIDERS PEACEKEEPING CONTRIBUTION

20. The US Embassy in Canberra believes there is a good chance Australia would provide forces for Middle East peacekeeping duties if requested by the UN and the US. Prime Minister Whitlam would probably also want a request from the USSR and Arab parties. The embassy has learned that senior officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs met early today to discuss the possible provision of Australian troops to the UN emergency force.

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ISRAEL

21. Prime Minister Meir claims the Soviet Union made much graver threats against Israel in the present conflict than during the 1956 Suez crisis. According to Reuter, Mrs. Meir told leaders of the Labor Party last night that Israel "had emerged from a great danger" in the reported confrontation between the US and the Soviet Union over the presence of Soviet forces in the area. She gave no further details.

LIBYA-EGYPT

22. According to the Egyptian daily Al-Ahram, Libyan President Qadhafi conferred in Cairo Thursday night with Sadat and senior Egyptian army officers.

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25. Muhsin added that the Iraqi troops in Syria represent a grave threat to the Syrian regime because the Iraqi officer corps consists entirely of dedicated Baath Party members who oppose Asad and who would like to see his regime replaced by another wing of the Syrian Baath Party.

OIL

26. Oil company representatives have informed the US that Saudi Arabia, in addition to previously announced embargo measures against the US, has ordered ARAMCO not to provide bunkers either to US navy vessels or to any ships under charter to the US military. The denial of bunkering is to include commercial tankers chartered by the Military Sea Command to transport contract petroleum products to US forces.

27. Bahrainis, according to industry sources, are also refusing to load contract petroleum products, but are still permitting tankers turned away as a result of the Arab embargo to receive bunkers.

28. Canadian External Affairs Minister Sharp said yesterday that it was Abu Dhabi, and not Saudi Arabia, that had halted an oil shipment to Canada. Sharp said an earlier report of a halt by Saudi Arabia was incorrect. Arab ambassadors, in a meeting with Sharp, could give no reason for the reported Abu Dhabi action. Energy Minister MacDonald speculated that Abu Dhabi may not understand that oil shipments to Portland, Maine, are for bonded pipeline transit to Montreal.

ARAB BOYCOTT

29. According to UPI, the commissioner-general of the Office of the Arab Boycott of Israel yesterday announced in Damascus that airlines and ships using Israeli air and sea ports would be blacklisted until Tel Aviv withdraws its forces from all occupied Arab territories in full compliance with the Security Council cease-fire resolutions.